

STRANGE MYSTERIES OF THE DISMAL SWAMP

Revealed to the Journal by One Who Has Explored the Great Morass. HEALTH REIGNS EVERYWHERE.

The Weird Tales of Danger and Death Awaiting the Visitor Prove Baseless.

The words Dismal Swamp have a creepy sound. They make one think of quagmires, miasma, snakes, and all things horrible. People who have only read about this place, with its mysterious smoke and weird legends, are inclined to shudder even when they do read of it. To the North-erner the very name is a bugaboo to con- fure by, and every one remembers the frightful stories that were told about it in slavery days.

This idea proves to have been entirely wrong, for one who has penetrated the fastnesses of the swamp believes it is a very decent sort of a place after all. In fact, he would be entirely willing to return to it, and looks upon the idea of a residence there with feelings of pleasure. Instead of being unhealthy it is rapidly becoming a health resort, and people are going there to free themselves from the ills to which Nature is heir.

Whoever named the great morass must have seen it under much more trying conditions than was experienced by the present writer on his first visit. As stated, the two words thus coupled in the name give a weird and morbid impression, especially to those people who in their earlier days read the highly-colored sensational tales of fugitive slaves attempting to escape servitude, but invariably dying a lingering death from starvation, or from the attacks of poisonous reptiles or savage beasts in the dark recesses of this great unknown. It is very natural, therefore, that the writer was prejudiced against the region, and it was with some misgivings that he started in the early part of the past summer on a preliminary natural history exploration.

A NATURALIST'S PARADISE. How often are we deceived by false impressions or unwarranted conclusions and the very conditions which we dread often turn out to be sources of great pleasure. The present trip was an exception to this rule. Scarcely had the writer left the highland been left behind before it became evident that a naturalist's paradise lay before us, and not a miasmatic death hole. As we paddled along the quiet waters of Jericho Ditch on our way to Lake Drummond the majestic canopy of stately cypress, sour gum and maple trees protected us from the burning sun, and the sweet-scented flowers of the magnolias, azaleas and wild grapes, and the wavy cane added fragrance and beauty to the occasional never to be forgotten.

The Dismal Swamp is situated in that part of Virginia and North Carolina between the mouth of the James River on the north, Albemarle Sound on the south, the Pamlico Sound, or old sea beach, on the west and the ocean on the east. Originally it covered at least 2,000 square miles, but the various draining ditches and encroachments of agriculture have reduced it to about three-quarters its former area. It is the most northern of the extensive cane swamps, and carries with it many of the characteristic forms of Southern flora and fauna. Like the other swamps to the southward, its existence is principally due to the lack of drainage from deficiency of slope as well as to the retarding influence of the luxuriant vegetation.

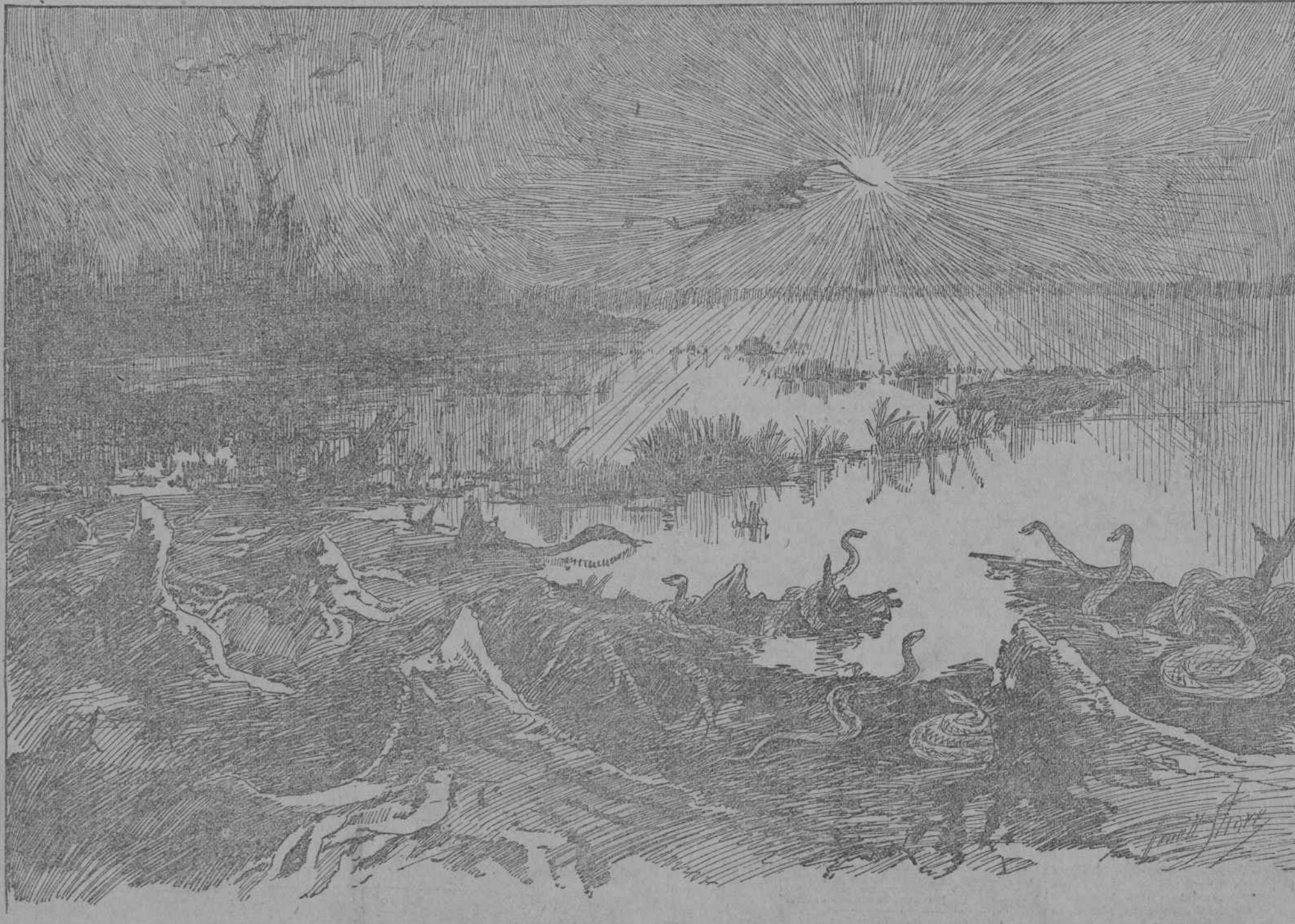
The incline toward the ocean in many places is not over a foot, and rarely exceeds twenty inches, which is too gradual a slope for proper drainage. Underlying the whole area is an ancient sea bed of hard white sand, which crops out along the shores and covers the bottom of Lake Drummond. To almost every one it is a source of great wonder to find the lake bottom composed of sandy pecked sand surrounded as it is by deep alluvial deposits. The cutting of the Dismal Swamp Ship Canal, which was one of the most important hydraulic works of the last century, did more to modify the swamp than any other cause. The canal, which was designed to be fifty feet wide and twelve feet deep, connects the waters of Chesapeake Bay with those of Albemarle Sound, and affords an easy and safe avenue for vessels passing between the two estuaries without going to sea.

WET AND DRY SECTIONS. The general direction of this large ditch is north and south, and since its construction the land to the east has been much dryer, while on the west side it has been correspondingly wet. As the drainage is from the west, the canal prevents the water going to the east, while the dyke-like embankment formed by the material from the construction of the canal, retards it from flowing into the waterway from the west side. The Jericho and Washington ditches are next in importance, having at high water an average width of eight feet and a depth of five feet. Although they enter Lake Drummond at the same place, their direction toward high land is nearly at right angles to each other.

The Washington Ditch, named for its illustrious designer, commences five miles south of Suffolk, Va., a famous peanut country, and extends in an easterly direction for five miles, to Lake Drummond. The Jericho Ditch, about ten miles in length, extends from a mile east of the above-named city to the lake. A peculiarity about this ditch is that from nearly midway between the Nauseamond River and Lake Drummond

Sunrise in the Heart of the Great Dismal Swamp.

From a Photograph by Dr. A. K. Fisher, Ornithological Bureau, United States Department of Agriculture.



there is a divide, north and south of which the water flows in opposite directions, becoming more and more rapid as it approaches the divide. Consequently, no matter which way the boatman is going, he has the current with him the latter half of the journey. Usually these canal highways furnish an easy means of access and ingress, though occasionally, as during the past season, the long drought draws up the water, and then it is most difficult to reach the lake. The writer has had both experiences. In June he paddled with perfect ease along the dividing ditch, while in October he had to tramp over tangled roots and through masses of cane and thorny vines, making progress with great difficulty.

A FAST HARVEST OF TIMBER. The valuable timber which covered this vast area attracted attention a century or more ago, and was to a great extent instrumental in causing the various ditches to be dug so that it might be taken out and easily marketed. The cypress, white cedar (known as juniper in the swamp) and pine were the trees most sought after, and have been so extensively cut that they are only found in commercial quantities in the most inaccessible part of the swamp. The logs are carried from the centre of the marsh to the ditches or lake on a barge road—a corridor road supporting a rude wooden track, on which the barge is held. The logs are carried from the centre of the marsh to the ditches or lake on a barge road—a corridor road supporting a rude wooden track, on which the barge is held. The logs are carried from the centre of the marsh to the ditches or lake on a barge road—a corridor road supporting a rude wooden track, on which the barge is held.

The very best shingle timber is from the tree which has fallen years ago, and is covered with moss and other vegetation. When this substance, together with the decayed outer wood, is scraped off, the most perfect and seasoned heart wood is found. In other trees which go to make up the density of the growth may be mentioned the sour gum, tupelo, maple, ash, poplar, white oak or tulip of the North, sweet gum and magnolia. The cane adds picturesqueness to the lake shore and canal borders, while the flowering trees, and the graceful grapevines add beauty as well as fragrance to the whole. Now that the cypress, cedar and pine have become rare, the sour gum is monarch of the swamp and forms the greater part of the heavy timber.

A RESEMBLANCE TO NEW JERSEY. During the summer months the mosquitoes and flies are very numerous and so troublesome to the traveller that few, except the most stubborn woodcutters, venture into the domain of these little tormentors. At other times the lake is a favorite fishing resort of the people from the surrounding country. Lake Drummond, a most beautiful sheet of water, with clear, sandy bottom, is two miles wide by three long, and its only outlet is the "feeder" which supplies the Ship Canal with water. Originally the lake was surrounded by a belt of noble cypress mangroves in which from fifty to one hundred yards, but now only the stumps can be seen at the time of low water.

Tourists and excursionists from the surrounding country often make trips to the Lake of the Dismal Swamp to see its wonderful beauty or to spend the day in outdoor life. It can be reached from Norfolk by a steam launch, which passes up the "feeder" of the Dismal Swamp Canal, or by a long excursion boat from Suffolk, which is piloted by colored men up Jericho Ditch. Although small and not over fifteen feet deep in any place, the lake is liable to be rough, and frequent storms make it unsafe to venture upon it in the canoes. A number of unfortunate have been drowned in the past few years. The canoes, which are light and buoyant, are cut out of solid cypress trunks, and it requires great skill to form them into the proper shape. When once made, and not abused, they will last a lifetime.

Although the fish are abundant and are represented by numerous species, a few only attain any considerable size. In fact, three species only—the gar, blackfish or mudfish, and black bass locally known as shubbs—grow above five pounds in weight. In May and June the gar, some of them big fellows, upward of four feet in length, sport about the surface of the water and an unusual amount of profanity emanating from a group of fishermen denotes that a valuable bait and hook has gone with one of these bony monsters.

HOME OF THE MONSTER BASS. The black bass sometimes reach the size of ten pounds, and in certain weather afford rare sport to the skilled angler. Among the pan fish are two kinds of pickers—the "jack" and "pike"—yellow perch, which from its black bars has received the name of "moccasin perch," catfish, bass, catfish, and several kinds of sunfish designated

locally as "niners," "mudroes," "yellow bellies" and "gappers." It is seldom that a patient fisherman is not rewarded by a good catch of fish, and usually, if the weather is not windy, the fishing parties catch all that is required for food.

There is a rude building known as "Hotel Drummond" situated on the lake shore at the entrance of Jericho Ditch, where fishermen and others may stay during their sojourn at the lake. It is placed on piles, and although crude, makes a comfortable place to camp in.

When it becomes known that you intend

to visit the swamp, you are invariably asked if you are not afraid of the snakes. For it is a fact that during the warmer months snakes fairly swarm along the border of the canal and lake shores. By the inhabitants they are supposed to be very poisonous, but after carefully examining several hundred specimens we were unable to find one belonging to a venomous species. It is possible that the true water moccasin or Southern "cotton mouth" may occur rarely in the dense cypress swamps, as some of the shingle cutters were able to describe it pretty accurately.

The habit snakes have of crawling up the bushes along the shore to sun them-

selves, and falling into the water at the approach of the boat, makes them very conspicuous, and adds greatly to the discomfort of the unfortunate persons who fear them. It is doubtful whether the inhabitants placed much dependence on my assertion that the snakes were harmless, for even my trusty colored man, repeatedly shuddered when he saw me handle live snakes. Although these reptiles are very numerous as individuals, only a few kinds are at all common. The larger species are

the racer, or black snake; the king snake, and the water snakes, incorrectly called "water moccasins," and the smaller ones, the garter and little brown snakes. Frogs are abundant, and their varied croakings are heard throughout the hours of the night.

NOT FORTHEWITH THE BIRDS. The ornithologist who visits the Dismal Swamp in summer will be disappointed at the comparatively few birds breeding there. About forty-five kinds were found in June, and of these not over ten species were uncommon enough to be at all noticeable. The handsome prothonotary warbler, in its plumage of orange and white, cultivates the cane everywhere, and its sweet song is heard throughout the day, as cheery when coming from the dark and sombre swamps beyond as from the bright and sunny openings. Scarcely does the naturalist push his way into the canebrake before a metallic chirp is heard, and almost immediately a yellow-breasted bird with black head markings appears flitting about with half spread tail. This is the hooded warbler, another common inhabitant of the swamp. The rare swainson's hawk, however, is not known so far North, was seen on several occasions.

Durnal birds of prey are not very com-

mon, but owls are abundant, and their weird and varied calls are among the common sounds that break the stillness of the night and the quiet slumber of the sleeper. Herons are scarce, and during the summer season the wood duck is the only water fowl found there. In the fall, however, ducks, geese and occasionally swans come in at early morn from the outside, where they are harassed by gulls, and wildfowl, and are driven through the day. At this season the thickets, brakes and forests also swarm with the migrating herds of small birds, and the numerous sparrows, thrushes and others add a variety of food among the ripening berries.

OF THE LARGE MAMMALS FOUND IN the swamp, bear, deer, wildcats, raccoons, otters, opossums, mink, rabbits and squirrels are more or less abundant. Years ago stock grazed freely on the swamp, and the herds were multiplied, and finally formed considerable herds of cattle as well as any native denizen of the forest. In later years the herds have been reduced to a few, and consequently are wilder and much less numerous.

The bears sometimes attack on kill cattle by springing on their backs and biting the ligaments of their neck until they are severed, when the animal expires almost immediately. We saw the skeleton of a cow that had been eaten by bears, and the ground in the vicinity was beaten down by their tracks, showing that they returned to the carcass until it was completely devoured. The bears are very common and numbers are killed every year. One hunter secured a month, a year or two ago. During the summer they feed on various kinds of roots and berries, and when fall comes they almost exclusively on those of the sour gum.

It is wonderful to see how bears tear the limbs in the giant gum trees, and the efforts to reach the fruit. They climb to the top of the trees among the smaller branches and bend and break them as they secure the berries. Often after one of their visitations a tree looks as if its limbs had been struck by lightning, and it takes years for them to fully recover from the effects of their rough treatment. The stomach of a large bear we killed contained several quarts of the sour gum berries, which, although deer are quite common, it is difficult to shoot them, unless they are driven into the lake by the dogs. Wildcats are common, and a fine old one was shot as it crouched among the fallen timber on the lake shore.

SWARMING WITH RACCOONS. The raccoons fairly swarmed during the dry weather of last fall. Their tracks were everywhere, and during the night droves congregated about the small, muddy pools in the other side of the logs and contained therein. They were a great annoyance by getting into the traps set for other game. Some years gray squirrels are very plenty and afford great sport to the hunter. In the fall, when the lake is high, they are seen running about the logs on the shore, busily engaged in gathering from the water the floating acorns of the tupelo, of which they are so fond. It is not difficult to secure a good number by shooting them, while quietly paddling in a canoe along the shore. There are a number of small animals among the mice and shrews which are of great interest to the naturalist, but are rarely seen.

Strange as it may seem, the great swamp is a perfectly healthy place and is free from malarial fevers and kindred diseases. It is a fact, moreover, that people from the surrounding country sometimes go there to regain health. The water is so dark that it is nearly the color of whiskey, and is cool and pleasant to the taste. Sailing vessels, when starting on a voyage, used to fill their casks with the water, as it remained sweet so much longer than water procured at any other place.

A. K. FISHER, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture.

RARE FARE 3 CENTS OR 5 CENTS?

What the Margin Between the Smaller and Larger Coin Means to Rich Stockholders and Workaday Passengers.

The three-cent fare must come! It is as inevitable as was the one-cent newspaper. The elevated roads and the cable cars and the horse cars and the trolleys will all have to be content with a fair profit, and people who work for small salaries will be less pinched than they are now. To the men and women and children who go downtown from Harlem every morning and return to Harlem every evening on a week day to their work and on a Sunday to see their friends—the difference will be twenty-eight cents parts of Greater New York where each way, the difference is fifty-six cents.

It is not a rare thing to see the keen struggle for four bread-winners in the saving which such a family from might be lars and fourcents or more hundred teen dol-



year. Invalid of the this may be a change of air means a piano, or a ting out the heavy washing, such things means importance. Not to the so-called "best" people, and houses on Fifth Avenue, but to simple, earnest lives and keep alive those. If you put a three-cent piece margin of difference between them a good many absurd luxuries on which our "millionaires" waste money for the surrender of a box at the opera. But these losses which will leave the losers with more than they need, and on the other side of the account, the less fortunate among us will get a little more comfort and pleasure to help them through the long, grinding year's work. After all, it is the little bit more or the little bit less that does most to make work-a-day people cheerful or sad. When the necessities of life are provided and the possible loss of the bread winner has been insured against there comes, if a little more can be earned or a little less be spent, the possibility of looking for a little enjoyment. Men and women are not machines into whose mouths food can be dropped with the certainty that a fixed amount of work will be received in exchange for it. They need to be kind to themselves, in order that they may do the most effective work that is in them. And of the week's work will be the better done if it is relieved by an evening's amusement. It is equally true that every trifling discomfort and every moment of friction occasioned by the stern duty of saving the smallest penny diminishes by a little the worker's ability to do good work.

FAIR FACES IN THE "400."

The Prettiest Debutantes of the Season.

HERE'S A BEAUTY PAGE FOR YOU.

Tennis, Golf and Outdoor Exercises Keep Them Fresh and Beautiful.

The beauty of the debutantes of New York society has become almost proverbial so well is the fact known to all men. Possibly the ladies are equally well aware of this, but that doesn't make so much difference, viewed from a social standpoint, for to please the eye of the sterner sex is the debutante's ambition.

During the last two seasons the number of comings out has been very large, last season taking the palm in respect to number, when the new social stars aggregated fully 150. All have stood the test of the Patriarch's ball. Some have extended for life the engagements blushing entered into on that occasion. Others are still fancy free.

The types of beauty represented in this army of young debutantes are as various as the charms portrayed. The bright winsomeness of the American girl was never more thoroughly in evidence. Portraits that are given herewith demonstrate this fact beyond cavil.

One of the most charming young women, a debutante of last season, is Miss Helen Edwards, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Albert L. Edwards, of No. 12 West Thirty-third street. She is a remarkably pretty girl of the medium blonde type, with a face of unusual animation and intelligence. It might be said that her beauty is of the Dresden variety. What makes Miss Edwards particularly interesting just at present is the fact that before the year is out she is to become Mrs. Archie Mackay—Mackay is a son of Mr. Bernard Mackay. He is tall and dark and a very good fellow. There is a slight romance connected with this engagement, and it is said that Miss Edwards met her fiancé at the first ball she attended after coming out—the Dinahfield ball, danced at Delmonico's a little over a year ago. Those who know say it was a case of love at first sight.

A contemporary of Miss Edwards and one who is a general favorite in society is Miss Emily Vanderbilt Sloane, the second daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Douglas Sloane, of the famous Vanderbilt mansions on Fifth avenue, near Fifth-second street. As Mrs. Sloane was a Miss Vanderbilt, a daughter of Cornelius Vanderbilt, it is, of course, seen that Miss Emily is to be regarded in the light of a heiress. She is a very attractive girl, about 19 years of age, with a face of unusual beauty. She is tall and dark and a very good fellow. There is a slight romance connected with this engagement, and it is said that Miss Edwards met her fiancé at the first ball she attended after coming out—the Dinahfield ball, danced at Delmonico's a little over a year ago. Those who know say it was a case of love at first sight.

Four of the most charming of the present Winter are Miss Louise Falconer, Miss Maude Robinson, Miss Coffin and Miss Bradley, all daughters of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Falconer, of No. 8 East Sixty-second street. Miss Falconer was a Miss McKim, a daughter of the late Mr. McKim, a well-known architect and a favorite among the younger set of society. She is a beautiful girl, with a face of unusual beauty, but her greatest attraction is the fact that she is apparently unconscious of her beauty.

Miss Maude Robinson most certainly can be numbered among the sweetest and prettiest debutantes of the season. It is reported that her engagement will soon be announced to Mr. William H. Goron, whose uncle, the late William J. Goron, was a prominent member of the New York and wealthiest citizens of Cleveland. Miss Robinson is the second daughter of the late Beverly Robinson, a well-known banker and clubman. Her mother, who is still living, was a Miss King, of Staten Island.

Miss Lita Coffin is the first daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Coffin. She is a remarkably handsome girl of the brunette type of beauty, very fond of outdoor sports and a very accomplished tennis player. Miss Coffin is to marry Mr. J. D. Van Rensselaer, a son of Dr. Van Rensselaer.

Miss Julie Fay Bradley is undoubtedly one of the prettiest young debutantes of the season. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edson Bradley. Miss Bradley can be numbered among the heiresses of this city. She is a modern type of beauty, with a face of unusual beauty, but her greatest attraction is the fact that she is apparently unconscious of her beauty.

Miss Alice Sanderson is the daughter of Mr. Philip J. Sands, of No. 20 East Thirty-third street, although fond of society is really more of a home body, and is fond of tennis, sailing and golf. She is also one of the most graceful skaters in New York and is often seen at the ice palace and St. Nicholas rink. Miss Sands is fair and tall and never lacks for admirers or partners when in the house. Her father, Mr. Sands, is a well-known businessman, and her mother, who is still living, was a Miss King, of Staten Island.

At the first Patriarch ball last Winter there was made the debut of a young woman who shortly after her entrance into the ballroom won the cynosure of all eyes. She was tall and dark, of a sweet countenance to perfection and it could be seen from a glance that she was "to the manner born." This young woman was Miss Marion McKee. From that night to this day she has been a general favorite, and is regarded as one of the handsomest women who have ever made their appearance in a New York ball room. Miss McKee is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles McKee, the well-known clubman. Her brother, Charles, Jr., married last Winter Miss Mary D. Pell, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Pell. Miss McKee is a very dark and handsome, with the most becoming brilliant color. The three remaining young women whose portraits are here pictured are Miss Marie Vase, Miss Leland and Miss Vase. Miss Marie Vase is a blonde and Miss Leland and Miss Pell are brunettes. Miss Leland was to have made her debut last Winter, but owing to the death of her father, the late Joseph Leland, who died a few months ago, her debut was postponed until next Winter. Miss Marie Vase, who is one of a numerous family of daughters, is the beauty of the family. Miss Vase's mother, who was a Miss Power, is a cousin of Mrs. Gus La Montagne.

One of the most general favorites in society is Miss Mary Howland Pell, of the very blue-blooded Pell family of this city. She is much larger than any of the other debutantes, and is a very good fellow. Her debut last Winter at a reception given her by her aunt, Mrs. Mary D. Pell. Her mother, Mrs. J. D. Pell, is a very good fellow. Like Miss Sands, Miss Pell is very fond of outdoor sports and is also quite a skillful roller-skater and badminton player.